United Nations

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ United Nations mission to assess humanitarian emergency needs of population of Iraq and Kuwait arrives in Baghdad; separate mission to assess Iraqi practices against Kuwaiti civilian population leaves Headquarters for Bahrain.

+ Secretary-General sends small United Nations team to Albania to assist Government in present humanitarian circumstances.

+ Government of Angola agrees to resumption of United Nations Special Relief Programme for Angola.

+ Human Rights Commission concludes session in Geneva during which it adopted 82 resolutions.

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The humanitarian mission to assess the emergency needs of the population of Iraq and Kuwait arrived yesterday afternoon in Baghdad from Amman, Jordan, where the head of the mission, Under-Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari had talks with Jordanian Foreign Minister Taher Al-Masri.

The Secretary-General's spokeswoman told correspondents today that Mr. Ahtisaari and the mission met yesterday evening with the Iraqi Minister of State, Mohammad Said Al-Sahaf, and representatives of various government departments. Working groups established to assist the mission with its mandate of assessing emergency needs held their first meetings last night. Mr. Ahtisaari was expected to remain in Iraq until 18 March, after which he is scheduled to travel to Kuwait.

Apart from members of the Secretariat, the 20-person mission included representatives from several United Nations humanitarian organizations. It travelled to Baghdad last Thursday in an aircraft supplied to the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) by the Argentine Government, which also carried 20 tons of urgent medical supplies.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

In a separate announcement, the spokeswoman said the other United Nations mission to the area, led by former Under-Secretary-General Abdulrahim A. Farah, to assess the loss of civilian lives and infrastructure damage in Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation, was leaving New York this afternoon and flying to Bahrain.

The 12-member mission was expected to arrive in Kuwait on Saturday on a plane provided by the Kuwaiti Government, she said, adding that Mr. Farah expected the mission to remain in Kuwait for approximately two weeks.

The spokeswoman also announced that the Secretary-General's Personal Representative in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Benon Sevan, arrived in Moscow yesterday for talks with the Soviet authorities concerning the political settlement of the Afghan question.

Before leaving for Moscow, Mr. Sevan held talks with President Najibullah of Afghanistan in Kabul last Wednesday, and with Prime Minister Muhammed Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan in Islamabad last Saturday.

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In another announcement today, the spokeswoman said that yesterday the Secretary-General had sent to Albania, at the request of that Government, a small United Nations team to assist it in "the present humanitarian circumstances". The mission was headed by Steffan de Mistura, Special Envoy on Albania, accompanied by two members of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Thousands of Albanians have been fleeing to Italy by sea. The UNHCR appealed last week to the Italian Government to set up procedures to determine whether the asylum-seekers qualified for political refugee status.

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It was announced at Headquarters today that the Government of Angola had agreed to the resumption of the United Nations Special Relief Programme for Angola. The agreement came as a result of the second round of talks on 6 and 7 March between a senior United Nations official and the Government of Angola to examine thoroughly problems which had arisen in the implementation of the Programme.

Following those meetings, the President of Angola, José Eduardo dos Santos, and the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship, James O.C. Jonah, issued a communiqué saying that the Government's decision was taken on the basis of firm assurances given by the United Nations that appropriate arrangements would be worked out to ensure that the principles underlying the Programme would be honoured. According to the communiqué, the United Nations undertook to ensure that nothing would be done to violate the sovereignty of Angola.

(more)

Both sides further agreed that there was urgent necessity to institute a proper machinery for consultations with a view to avoiding any misunderstanding in the operation of the Programme.

It was also agreed that the Secretary-General should renew his urgent appeal for humanitarian assistance to Angola since the response to the earlier appeal had been disappointing.

The first round of talks was held in Angola from 22 to 25 February.

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The Commission on Human Rights ended its forty-seventh session in Geneva on Friday after adopting its report to the Economic and Social Council.

In a closing statement, the Chairman, Enrique Bernales Ballesteros of Peru, said the last decade could be said to have been a lost decade from an economic point of view, but from the point of view of political developments, it had been a decade for human rights. The active commitment to human rights of non-State actors, such as non-governmental organizations, was the best example of dedication to human rights.

Mr. Bernales Ballesteros said that of the 82 resolutions adopted by the Commission, 75 were by consensus -- a significant 91.4 per cent. He added that the work undertaken in preparation for the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights was of paramount importance.

The Commission also approved its provisional agenda for its 1993 session, which included issues such as the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine; self-determination; South Africa, apartheid and racism; economic, social and cultural rights; right to development; status of covenants; and treaty bodies.

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